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Follow-up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum

System-wide action plan for ensuring a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Summary

In the outcome document of the 2014 high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly known as the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to develop, within existing resources, a system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The system-wide action plan was developed following consultations with indigenous peoples, Member States and the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues.

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I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The outcome document of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples contains a series of commitments calling for multifaceted action by a range of actors, first and foremost Member States, but also the United Nations system. Among these is a request that the Secretary-General develop a system-wide action plan to ensure a coherent approach to achieving the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 69/2, para. 31). The outcome document also requests the designation of an existing senior official of the United Nations system to be responsible for coordinating the action plan, raising awareness of the rights of indigenous peoples at the highest possible level and increasing the coherence of the activities of the United Nations system in this regard. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs was designated to perform this responsibility and has coordinated the development of the action plan.[1]

2. For the preparation of the action plan, under the guidance of the Under-Secretary-General, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs organized consultations with Member States, indigenous peoples, representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the three United Nations mechanisms with specific mandates concerning indigenous peoples and others.

3. Throughout these consultations, the need for further awareness-raising on the Declaration and for capacity-building to implement its provisions was highlighted as a central concern. This concern has been raised in relation to the United Nations system, as well as among Member States, indigenous peoples themselves and the broader societies in which they live. The consultations also identified the need for concerted action to implement the Declaration, especially at the country level. The full and effective participation of indigenous people in processes that affect them is another matter that has been a priority for indigenous peoples and is a principle that is recognized and supported by Member States. The action plan seeks to address these matters.

4. Based on the feedback received, the plan focuses on the following action areas: (a) raise awareness on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and indigenous issues; (b) support the implementation of the Declaration, particularly at the country level; (c) support the attainment of indigenous peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (d) conduct an exercise to map existing policies, standards, guidelines, activities, resources and capacities within the United Nations and the multilateral system to identify opportunities and gaps; (e) develop the capacities of States, indigenous peoples, civil society and United Nations personnel at all levels; and (f) support the participation of indigenous peoples in processes that affect them. The primary aim of this action plan is to increase United Nations system coherence in addressing the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples in its work, including in support of Member States, with the ultimate goal of implementing, with the

[1] The present action plan was developed by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues over the course of 10 months in 2015 and was finalized at the annual meeting of the Support Group on 26 and 27 October 2015. The Secretary-General introduced the action plan to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination at its meeting on 18 December 2015.

effective participation of indigenous peoples, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at all levels.

5. The present action plan aims to promote improved support to Member States and to indigenous peoples themselves. Particular attention is paid to the United Nations system using its convening capacity to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between State actors and indigenous peoples, promoting indigenous peoples' participation in global, regional and national processes that affect them and supporting Member States to take into account indigenous peoples' rights and views in line with international standards.

B. Guiding framework

6. In accordance with the mandate from the General Assembly and as reflected in the action areas set out below, the action plan is focused on promoting the achievement of the ends of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

7. The Declaration defines the minimum standards necessary for the survival, dignity and well-being of indigenous peoples. It is a definitive expression of the rights of indigenous peoples as recognized by the General Assembly, identifying their rights in the context of a comprehensive range of thematic areas, including health, education, culture, land rights, traditional livelihoods, traditional knowledge and collective rights. The Declaration enshrines the rights to self-determination and development with culture and identity.

8. The action plan falls clearly within the letter and spirit of articles 41 and 42 of the Declaration, which call for the United Nations system to contribute to the full realization of the Declaration and to promote respect for and full implementation of its provisions in addressing all the articles of the Declaration within each entity's respective mandate.

9. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets the global development agenda and affects the way the international community will work with indigenous peoples over the coming years. The 2030 Agenda has addressing inequalities as its centrepiece. The overall aim of the new Agenda is to leave no one behind by reaching the furthest behind first and by ensuring that Sustainable Development Goal targets are met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society.

10. It reaffirms the responsibility of all States, to respect, protect and promote human rights, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status. The open-ended nature of the list constitutes an implicit recognition that all human beings are born free and equal and it thereby ensures consistency with existing human rights standards on non-discrimination.

11. The action plan ultimately aims to contribute to the realization of indigenous peoples' rights at the country level through reinforced support by the United Nations system to Member States. The United Nations Indigenous Peoples' Partnership can be one of the key means, among others, to promote coherence and joint programming at the country level and it is therefore important to strengthen the Partnership and its scope.

12. Building upon already existing initiatives within the United Nations system, the action plan promotes awareness, understanding and better and more effective use of guidelines and resource material developed by the United Nations system on indigenous peoples' issues, including the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues and the related plan of action, produced as the resource kit on indigenous peoples' issues. These resources were designed to assist the system in mainstreaming and integrating indigenous peoples' issues into processes in the operational activities of the United Nations, taking into account the provisions of the Declaration and International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), along with other relevant instruments. The present action plan also builds on recommendations developed by the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues in 2008 on integrating the Declaration and the Convention into the work of the United Nations system.

13. The United Nations system's work on indigenous peoples' issues is guided by the five country programming principles of the United Nations Development Group, namely: the human rights-based approach; gender equality; environmental sustainability; results-based management; and capacity development.

14. Under a human rights-based approach, the plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, labour rights and the right to development. A human rights-based approach to programming ensures that human rights standards and principles, such as equality and non-discrimination and participation and accountability, guide all phases of the programming process and facilitates a sharp focus on developing the capacity of duty-bearers to meet their obligations and that of rights-holders to claim their rights.

15. The principle of gender equality ensures that the present action plan takes into account the differential impacts of policies and programmes on women and men and girls and boys and, in particular, ensures that the multiple forms of discrimination that indigenous girls, adolescents and women experience are addressed through appropriate means identified in consultation with them and that such measures advance their empowerment.

16. The principle of environmental sustainability ensures that development meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; the present action plan takes into account this intergenerational imperative. It will ensure recognition of the close link between environmental factors and the realization of the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples, including the way indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge contributes to sustainable development, throughout the activities set out by the present action plan.

17. The action plan builds on the momentum and spirit of the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and, to that end, will promote partnership and collaboration between the United Nations system, civil society organizations and multilateral bodies such as regional development banks and human rights special procedures and commissions.

18. The system-wide action plan will contribute to the fit-for-purpose agenda by ensuring stronger linkages between the normative and operational work of the

United Nations, increasing coordination and coherence in addressing the rights of indigenous peoples. It calls for strengthened United Nations senior level engagement, encouraging working with Member States in a spirit of partnership and cooperation to generate support for the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As such, the action plan implies the need to advance the rights and well-being of indigenous peoples, in the field and at headquarters, including by shared analysis, common strategies and greater accountability.

19. For the present action plan to be effectively implemented at the country level, it is important that United Nations resident coordinators are empowered and supported from the highest levels at headquarters. Only by ensuring adequate political traction at both the global and country levels, will the dialogues and programmes between indigenous peoples, Member States and the United Nations be fruitful in advancing the rights of indigenous peoples.

II. Elements of the action plan

A. Raise awareness of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

1. Conduct a high-level awareness-raising initiative

20. The Secretary-General and other high-level United Nations officials will use their good offices to raise awareness of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Drawing upon key messages to be drafted and relevant recommendations made by the international human rights system, the indigenous-specific United Nations mechanisms and other relevant agencies, officials and spokespersons will reiterate the commitment of the United Nations system to the Declaration and its provisions and encourage ratification of ILO Convention No. 169. Activities will include advocacy and awareness-raising in speeches and statements, letters to United Nations country teams and others in the United Nations system, bilateral meetings with Member States and visits to indigenous peoples' communities. Substantive support to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General will be provided by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

2. Develop a succinct set of key messages based on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

21. In the context of the awareness-raising initiative described above, messages will be developed that express the commitment of the United Nations system to the Declaration and to supporting its implementation. These messages will be aimed at raising awareness and building support for the rights of indigenous peoples among all key stakeholders at all levels (Member States, United Nations personnel, relevant civil society organizations and the general public). The messages should be derived from the Declaration and should be presented in a coherent manner that is useful to policymakers and practitioners. The messages will be developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Public Information in collaboration with members of the Inter-Agency Support Group.

3. Develop and launch a media and outreach campaign

22. In support of the high-level awareness-raising initiative, and taking advantage of existing communication channels within the United Nations system, a media and outreach campaign should be developed and undertaken using social media, United Nations websites, United Nations radio and television and other platforms, based on the agreed key messages. This could include infographics, photos, videos, exhibits, fact sheets, stories and opinion editorials by United Nations experts on indigenous peoples. This may also include the nomination of high-level or prominent champions of indigenous peoples, such as indigenous artists, actors, politicians and other public figures. This strategy will engage the network of United Nations information centres, services and offices in proactive promotion of United Nations activities vis-à-vis indigenous issues at the country and regional levels. This strategy will be developed by the Department of Public Information in close collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and in cooperation with other interested United Nations partners.

B. Support the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly at the country level

1. Support national partners in the reform and implementation of legal frameworks, policies, strategies and plans to further the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, through joint programming and other initiatives

23. In the outcome document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, Member States committed to developing and implementing national action plans, strategies and other measures to achieve the ends of the Declaration. They also committed to taking measures at the national level, including legislative, policy and administrative measures, to achieve the ends of the Declaration. Building on these commitments, Member States invited United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to support the implementation of national action plans, strategies and other measures to achieve the ends of the Declaration. United Nations country teams, the United Nations Development Programme and other agencies, funds and programmes will engage with Member States to support and promote these activities in cooperation with other interested United Nations partners.

2. Support the mainstreaming of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and International Labour Organization Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) in national development plans and in common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks

24. In applying a human rights-based approach in its work with national partners and through the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in particular, United Nations country teams, in cooperation with other United Nations system partners, will promote the mainstreaming of indigenous peoples' rights. The United Nations Development Group programming principle of following a human rights-based approach, the Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues and the resource kit on indigenous peoples' issues provide a road map and tools for integrating indigenous peoples' issues into processes for programmes at the country level, including processes aimed at implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. United Nations country teams through their work will also

promote recommendations pertaining to indigenous peoples emerging out of human rights mechanisms, including human rights treaty bodies, ILO supervisory bodies, special procedure mandates and the universal periodic review. Members of the Inter-Agency Support Group will ensure that United Nations country teams have access to expertise, data and other relevant sources of information on the rights of indigenous peoples in the preparation of common country assessments and Development Assistance Frameworks and in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda national level processes.

3. Promote the establishment or strengthening of consultative mechanisms and platforms of dialogue under the leadership of the resident coordinators

25. These consultative mechanisms will inform the operational activities of the United Nations country teams. They will also promote regular dialogue between indigenous peoples, State actors, the private sector and other relevant entities to foster trust and to advance the rights of indigenous peoples. Dialogues may also be held at the regional and global levels with relevant partners, such as intergovernmental regional mechanisms, development banks and regional inter-agency mechanisms. Support can also be delivered through the generation of evidence, analysis and knowledge exchanges related to indigenous peoples.

C. Support the realization of indigenous peoples' rights in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

26. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first. As a general principle, it is important to ensure that efforts by the United Nations system to assist Member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals include, where possible, a focus on indigenous peoples, who are among the furthest behind. Specifically the United Nations system should:

(a) Incorporate indigenous issues into programming to implement the 2030 Agenda and ensure such programming is consistent with the provisions of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

(b) Promote the participation of indigenous peoples in programmes, projects and other activities related to the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, including the participation of indigenous women, persons with disabilities, older persons, children and youth;

(c) Where possible, ensure that information is gathered and disseminated on progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for indigenous peoples.

D. Map existing standards and guidelines, capacities, training materials and resources within the United Nations system, international financial institutions and the members of the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples' Issues for the effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

27. The United Nations system is already engaged in promoting the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through a range of activities. These include the collection and dissemination of information on the situation of indigenous peoples, with particular emphasis on research, statistical data collection, policy development and analysis, reports to human rights bodies and mechanisms and training materials. Some international agreements contain indicators of relevance to indigenous peoples and these are being put into operation, such as on traditional knowledge. Several organizations have either adopted specific policies and mechanisms of engagement with indigenous peoples or are in the process of doing so.

28. An exercise to map this wealth of information will not only provide an overview of the United Nations system's activities related to indigenous peoples, but will also support the creation of a central hub of information on indigenous peoples' issues within the system, for use by all partners. This would serve the purpose of identifying existing resources for effective and coherent action on indigenous peoples' issues and also facilitate the identification of gaps in knowledge and capacity for informed decision-making on further investments in resources for gathering evidence and developing capacity. For continuous updating of the proposed knowledge hub, this information will be provided each year by members of the Inter-Agency Support Group and consolidated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as part of the annual report to the annual sessions of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and other forums as requested.

E. Develop the capacities of States, indigenous peoples, civil society and United Nations personnel

1. Integrate indigenous peoples' issues into existing capacity development activities

29. The United Nations system already provides a wealth of training opportunities, including training in the human rights-based approach to programming, results-based management, monitoring and evaluation and training in the specific fields of each United Nations entity. Indigenous issues should be incorporated into these capacity development activities, as appropriate.

30. This should ensure, where appropriate and feasible: (a) common messaging in line with the Declaration; and (b) coordination within the United Nations system in terms of organization and production of materials. Capacity development will highlight the coherence and complementarity of the Declaration, ILO Convention No. 169 and core United Nations human rights treaties. This will be implemented by all relevant organizations that conduct capacity development, including the United Nations System Staff College.

2. Develop the capacities of United Nations staff at all levels

31. Initiatives will include:

(a) **Technical capacity development** in drafting and revision of national policy that is inclusive and consistent with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO Convention No. 169 and human rights treaties and standards, and in building on the United Nations Development Group Guidelines on Indigenous Peoples' Issues;

(b) **Regional and subregional training activities** or programmes carried out through the regional commissions and through the United Nations Development Group regional directors team's quality support and assurance group. Collaboration in this regard with regional institutions like the regional banks and regional and subregional organizations that have programmes dealing with indigenous peoples would be promoted;

(c) **Online capacity development on indigenous issues**. Online training and, where possible, accredited training, using train-the-trainer methodologies, to be developed as tools aimed at and for United Nations staff.

3. Capacity development for Member State officials

32. Indigenous peoples and Member States have identified a lack of knowledge about indigenous peoples and their issues and rights as one of the major obstacles to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Capacity development of Member State officials should be accommodated in projects that target indigenous peoples, as well as other United Nations initiatives.

4. Training representatives of indigenous people's institutions and organizations

33. Some indigenous peoples lack the skills, access and resources to advocate effectively for their rights and well-being. It is important to focus specifically on indigenous peoples, especially those with a capacity to train others and disseminate information, from countries and/or communities that have limited access to resources. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Intellectual Property Organization have dedicated indigenous fellowship programmes, and various other United Nations entities, including the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, organize trainings for indigenous peoples.

34. Support to indigenous-led capacity development through trainings should also be provided and integrated into development initiatives targeting indigenous peoples. All capacity development exercises aimed at indigenous peoples should include the participation of indigenous women, indigenous persons with disabilities and indigenous children and youth.

F. Advance the participation of indigenous peoples in United Nations processes

35. Although the participation of indigenous peoples' representatives and institutions in meetings of relevant United Nations bodies is a matter that the General Assembly will continue to consider, the United Nations system can take

concrete and practical steps towards increased full and effective participation in processes that affect them. This can include consultative mechanisms, funds and tools for seeking free, prior and informed consent and other means for facilitating full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, including indigenous women, elders, persons with disabilities and indigenous children and youth.